

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

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KIRKPATRICK DUNBAR,

Plaintiff,

COMPLAINT

-against-

ROSA MEXICANO SECOND
AVENUE LLC AND 251 EAST 52ND
ASSOCIATES, L.P.,

Civil Action No.

1:22-cv-10256

Defendants.

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Plaintiff, KIRKPATRICK DUNBAR, (“Plaintiff”), by and through his counsel, The Marks Law Firm, P.C., hereby files this Complaint and sues ROSA MEXICANO SECOND AVENUE LLC, a domestic limited liability company, and 251 EAST 52ND ASSOCIATES L.P., a domestic limited liability company, both registered in the State of New York, (hereinafter collectively “Defendants”), for a) injunctive relief, b) compensatory relief, and c) attorney fees and costs pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 12181, et. Seq., of the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”), the New York Human Rights Law (“NYCHRL”), and the New York State Human Rights Law (“NYSHRL”) and alleges:

JURISDICTION AND PARTIES

1. This is an action for declaratory and injunctive relief pursuant to Title III of the ADA, 42 U.S.C. § 12181, et. Seq. This Court is vested with original jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. §1331 and §1333.
2. Venue is proper in this Court, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1331(B) in that all events giving rise to this lawsuit occurred in the State of New York.

3. The violative Premises and the events giving rise to this lawsuit are located at 251 East 52nd Street, New York, NY 10022. (hereinafter “Premises”).

4. Venue is proper in this Court as the premises is located in the State of New York, County of New York.

5. The Defendants ROSA MEXICANO SECOND AVENUE LLC and 251 EAST 52ND ASSOCIATES L.P. are each authorized to conduct and are conducting business within the State of New York.

6. Upon information and belief, ROSA MEXICANO SECOND AVENUE LLC is the lessee and/or operator of the real property, and the owner of the improvements where the Premises is located which is the subject of this action. Defendant also maintains and controls the Premises.

7. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §12181(7) and 28 C.F.R. §36.104, Defendants’ Premises is a place of public accommodation in that it is an establishment which provides goods and services to the public.

8. Upon information and belief, 251 EAST 52ND ASSOCIATES L.P. is the owner, lessor and/or operator and managing agent of the real property where the Premises is located, which is the subject of this action, which also maintains and controls the Premises.

9. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §12181(7) and 28 C.F.R. §36.104, the building and/or Premises which is the subject to this action is a public accommodation covered by the ADA and which must be in compliance therewith.

10. The remedies provided by the NYSHRL against discrimination are not exclusive and state administrative remedies need not be exhausted in connection with suits brought under the Federal Civil Rights Act.

11. At the time of Plaintiff's visits to the Premises, and prior to the instant action, Plaintiff was, and still is, a resident of the City and State of New York. Plaintiff is a paraplegic, which constitutes a "qualified disability" under the ADA of 1990. Plaintiff uses a wheelchair for mobility.

12. On July 12, 2022, Plaintiff last attempted to enter Defendants' trendy Rosa Mexicano Premises, which is a few miles from his Bronx home, just blocks from his friends home where he hangs out on a regular basis, to purchase their authentic Mexican Food dishes. Although Rosa Mexicano is back in the neighborhood with their trendy Mexican style restaurant where they first opened in 1984, they unfortunately failed to include the trendy ADA accessible features at Plaintiffs detriment. Plaintiff is 39 years old and enjoys the popular restaurants like Rosa Mexicano and was excited to have a refreshing drink and Mexican food during the summer. Because of the architectural barriers at the entrances of the store, such as the step at the entrance, Plaintiff was unable to enter the restaurant to escape the heat, or hang out by the 16 person bar with his friend, nor was he able to sit at the indoor tables and was forced to rely on an employee to deliver his food to him outside and use the non-accessible table, making it difficult to eat to his embarrassment. As a result of this experience, Plaintiff was denied full and equal access to, and full and equal enjoyment of, the facilities at Defendants' Premises, which is subject to this instant litigation.

13. Plaintiff is routinely in the neighborhood visiting friends, appointments for his health, eating at restaurants, and visiting the various shops/stores in this major thoroughfare that attracts people from around the world. Plaintiff has attempted to enter Defendants' Premises on multiple occasions in the past during the summer, and as recently in November 2022, but continues to be denied access each time, and therefore suffered an injury in fact. Plaintiff is currently deterred from going to the restaurant based on his knowledge of the barriers to access that exists and intends

on immediately returning to the Premises to purchase drinks by the bar, and enjoy their unique and trendy authentic Mexican dishes once the barriers are removed and the Premises is ADA compliant.

14. Defendants' violations impede upon Plaintiff's, and other similarly situated disabled individuals' right to travel free of discrimination. It should be noted that the commercial premises on both sides of Rosa Mexicano, both has accessible permanent ramps to their entrance. There is no excuse for Defendants willfully ignoring their ADA compliance obligations.

COUNT I - VIOLATIONS OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

15. The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. The Act guarantees reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities to ensure they are not the subject of discrimination.

16. The ADA and 2004 ADA/ABA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (36 CFR Part 1191, Appendices B and C) along with 28 CFR Part 36, Subpart D, the New Construction and Alterations portion of Title III (all hereinafter referred to as the "2010 Standards" or "Accessibility Standards") dictate that property owners and operators of commercial premises being used as "commercial establishments" are responsible for complying with these Federal Accessibility Standards.

17. The Plaintiff is informed and believes, and therefore alleges that the Premises has begun operations and/or undergone substantial remodeling, repairs, and/or alterations since January 26, 1990.

18. Defendants have discriminated, and continue to discriminate, against the Plaintiff, and others that are similarly situated, by denying full and equal access to and full and equal

enjoyment of goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, and/or accommodations at Defendants' Premises, in violation of these Accessibility Standards.

19. The Plaintiff has been unable to and continues to be unable to enjoy full and equal safe access to, and the benefits of, all the accommodations and services offered at Defendants' Premises.

20. Plaintiff visited Defendants' Premises with the intention of utilizing Defendants' facilities, but was denied access to the Premises, and therefore suffered an injury in fact. In addition, Plaintiff continues to reside in New York and continues to desire to visit the Premises in the future, but will suffer future harm in that he is unable to access the Premises and continues to be discriminated against due to the architectural barriers which remain at the Premises, all in violation of the ADA, and New York State and City Human Rights Law.

21. Pursuant to the mandates of 42 U.S.C. §12134(a), On July 26, 1991, the Department of Justice, Office of Attorney General, promulgated Federal Regulations to implement the requirements of the ADA, known as the American with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (hereinafter "2010 ADAAG"), 28 C.F.R. Part 36, under which said Department may obtain civil penalties of up to \$55,000 for the first violation and \$110,000 for any subsequent violation.

22. The Defendants' Premises is in violation of 42 U.S.C. §12181 et. Seq., ADA and the 2010 Standards, and is discriminating against the Plaintiff as a result of inter alia the following specific violations:

- a. In front of Rosa Mexicano, the total vertical rise of accessible route leading from public sidewalk is greater than $\frac{1}{2}$ (one-half) inch due to steps leading to the two accessible entrances that create a vertical rise of approximately 6 inches and thus, the accessible

route is not ramped in compliance with section 405 or 406, this is a violation of section 303.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to access the units of the Property because the vertical rise in the form of stairs would make it almost impossible for Plaintiff to safely access the interior of the public accommodation.

- b. At Rosa Mexicano, the door to the accessible entrance lacks a clear minimum maneuvering clearance due to the fact the end of the latch side of the accessible entrance door being within 18 inches to the adjacent glass enclosure in violation of section 404.2.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would cause Plaintiff difficulty in utilizing the door to gain access to this unit because individuals in a wheelchair have their feet and legs sticking out in front of them thus requiring additional space to reach the door hardware and open the door. The current configuration of the accessible entrance of this unit blocks Plaintiff's ability to reach the door hardware and open the door.
- c. Due to a 6-inch vertical rise at both entrances, the Property lacks an access route from site arrival points such as the public streets and sidewalks to the accessible entrance in violation of section 206.2.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to access the Property.
- d. Due to an approximate 6-inch vertical rise at both entrances, the accessible route leading into this public accommodation contains a vertical rise in excess of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in violation of section 303.2 of the 2010 ADAAG Standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult and dangerous for Plaintiff to attempt to utilize the accessible route as it increases the likelihood of the wheelchair tipping.

- e. In front of Rosa Mexicano, due to an approximate 6-inch vertical rise at both accessible entrances, the maneuvering clearances of the accessible entrances are not level in violation of Section 404.2.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff to access this unit of the Property since it is often necessary for individuals in wheelchairs to need to use their hands to both wheel through the doorway and keep the door open with another hand. When the maneuvering clearance is not level, this ordinarily difficult process is made even more difficult by the presence of an excessive vertical rise.
- f. There is not at least one accessible entrance to each tenant space in the building that complies with section 404 of the 2010 ADAAG standards which is a violation of section 206.4.5 of the 2010 ADAAG Standards.
- g. As not all entrances comply with section 404 of the 2010 ADAAG Standards, entrances that do comply with section 404 of the 2010 ADAAG Standards are required to have signage identified by the International Symbol of Accessibility indicating an accessible entrance, however, no such signage exists on the Property in violation of section 216.6 of the 2010 ADAAG Standards. Moreover, there is a lack of directional signage indicating the location of the nearest accessible entrance. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff to locate an accessible entrance on the Property.
- h. The walking surfaces of the accessible route leading to the exterior seating have a cross slope in excess of 1:48, in violation of section 403.3 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to access the units of the Property because excessive cross-slope along accessible routes increases the likelihood of Plaintiff's wheelchair tipping over on its side and injuring Plaintiff.

- i. At least 5% of the tables are not accessible indoors or at the outside seating. In fact there is no accessible seating whatsoever.
- j. There is no accessible seating at the bar.
- k. Inside Rosa Mexicano, the bar is lacking any portion of the counter that has a maximum height of 34 (thirty-four) inches from the finished floor in violation of section 902.3 of the 2010 ADAAG standards, all portions of the bar exceed 34 (thirty-four) inches in height from the finished floor. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff to enjoy the unique eating experience at the bar.
- l. Inside Rosa Mexicano, the Property lacks an accessible route connecting the accessible elements and features of the main floor with the lower floor in violation of section 206.2.3 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. Specifically, the restroom is located in the lower floor and the only access is via stairs. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff to access public features of the Property. The building has more than three stories and none of the exceptions asserted in section 206.2.3 of the 2010 ADAAG standards apply.
- m. Inside Rosa Mexicano, the Property lacks an accessible route to the second floor.
- n. Due to the fact the restrooms are downstairs and not accessible, there is not a single accessible route connecting the accessible entrance to the features inside the Property, such as a restroom, in violation of section 206.2.4 of the 2010 ADAAG Standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff to access the interior features of the Property due to a safe accessible route leading from the exterior to the interior spaces inside the Property, such as the restroom.
- o. Even if there was access to the restroom downstairs, the restroom lacks signage in compliance with sections 216.8 and 703 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to

access would make it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to locate accessible restroom facilities.

- p. The lavatories and/or sinks in the restrooms have exposed pipes and surfaces and are not insulated or configured to protect against contact in violation of section 606.5 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to safely utilize the sink as the pipes underneath the sink typically have sharp surfaces and/or hot pipes, and since individuals in wheelchairs use a sink while seated, their legs are particularly vulnerable to these threats.
- q. The accessible toilet stall door is not self-closing and violates section 604.8.2.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for the Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to safely and privately utilize the restroom facilities.
- r. The door locking hardware of the bathroom stall has operable parts which require tight grasping, pinching or twisting of the wrist in violation of section 309.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to utilize the restroom facilities.
- s. The distance of the centerline of the toilet is more than 18" from the side wall. As a result, the toilet is not adequately positioned from the side wall or partition positioning in violation of 604.2 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to safely utilize the restroom facilities.
- t. The grab bars/handrails adjacent to the commode are missing and violate section 604.5 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff

and/or any disabled individual to safely transfer from the wheelchair to the toilet and back to the wheelchair.

- u. The toilet paper dispenser in the accessible toilet is not positioned in seven to nine inches in front of the toilet and therefore is in violation of section 604.7 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff to utilize the toilet due to the fact the toilet paper dispenser is at an improper distance from the toilet, given Plaintiff's disability, Plaintiff would not be able to get up and reach the toilet paper.
- v. The height of coat hook located in accessible restroom stall is above 48 (forty-eight) inches from the finished floor in violation of section 308.2.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to reach the coat hook as individuals in wheelchairs are seated and have significantly less reach range than individuals who stand up.
- w. Defendant fails to adhere to a policy, practice and procedure to ensure that all facilities are readily accessible to and usable by disabled individuals.

23. Upon information and belief, there are other current violations of, inter alia, the ADA at Defendants' Premises, and only once a full inspection is done can all said violations be identified.

24. To date, the architectural barriers and other violations of the ADA still exist, the removal of which is readily achievable and have not been remedied or altered in such a way as to effectuate compliance with the provisions of the ADA or to create access to the Premises.

25. Pursuant to ADA, 42 U.S.C. §1201 et. Seq. and the Accessibility Standards, the Defendants were required to make the Premises, a place of public accommodation, accessible to

person with disabilities since January 28, 1992. To date, the Defendants have failed to comply with this mandate.

26. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §12188, this Court is vested with the authority to grant the Plaintiff injunctive relief; including an order to alter the Premises to make them readily accessible to, and useable by, individuals with disabilities to the extent required by ADA, and order the closing of the Subject Facilities until the requisite modifications are completed.

COUNT II – VIOLATIONS OF THE NEW YORK CITY HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

27. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates, and re-alleges each and every allegation contained hereinabove in paragraphs “1” through “26” inclusive of this Complaint with the same force and effect as if hereinafter set forth at length.

28. The New York City Human Rights Law provides:

a. It shall be an unlawful discriminatory practice for any person, being the owner, lessee, proprietor, manager, superintendent, agent or employee of any place or provider of public accommodation because of the actual or perceived...disability...of any person, directly or indirectly, to refuse, withhold from or deny to such person any of the accommodations, advantages, facilities or privileges thereof...to the effect that any of the accommodations, advantages, facilities and or denied to any person on account of...disability...

NYC Admin. Code §8-107(4)(a).

29. Defendants are in violation of the New York City Human Rights Law by denying the Plaintiff full and safe access to all of the benefits, accommodations and services of the Premises.

30. Defendants' unlawful discriminatory conduct constitutes willful and wanton violations of the Administrative Code for which Plaintiff is entitled to an award of punitive damages. Admin. Code §8-502.

COUNT III – VIOLATIONS OF THE NEW YORK STATE HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

31. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates, and re-alleges each and every allegation contained hereinabove in paragraphs "1" through "30" inclusive of this Complaint with the same force and effect as if hereinafter set forth at length.

32. The New York State Human Rights Law provides:

a. It shall be unlawful discriminatory practice for any person, being the owner, lessee, proprietor, manager, superintendent, agent, or employee of any place of public accommodation...because of the...disability...of any person, directly, or indirectly, to refuse, withhold from or deny to such person any of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, or privileges thereof...to the effect that any of the accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges of any such place shall be refused, withheld from or denied to any person on account of...disability...

NYS Exec. Law §296 (2)(a).

33. Defendants' Premises is a place of public accommodation as defined in the New York State Human Right Law.

34. The Defendants have further violated the New York State Human Rights Law by being in violation of the rights provided under the ADA.

35. Defendants are in violation of the New York State Human Rights law by denying the Plaintiff full and safe access to all of the benefits, accommodations and services of the Premises.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

36. The Plaintiff demands compensatory damages in an amount to be determined by proof, including all applicable statutory damages and fines, for violations of their civil rights under New York State Human Rights Law and City Claw, including compensatory damages contemplated by §297(4)(c).

37. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §12188, this Court is vested with the authority to grant the Plaintiff's injunctive relief; including an order to alter the Premises to make them readily accessible to, and useable by, individuals with disabilities to the extent required by the ADA, the New York City Human Rights Law, and the New York State Human Rights law, and closing the Subject Facilities until the requisite modifications are completed.

38. Plaintiff's reasonable attorneys' fees, expenses, and costs of suit as provided by state and federal law;

WHEREFORE, the Plaintiff hereby demands judgment against the Defendants joint and severally and requests the following injunctive and declaratory relief:

- a. The Court declares the Premises owned, operated, leased, controlled, and/or administered by the Defendants are in violation of the ADA, the New York City Human Rights Law, and of the New York State Human Rights Law;
- b. The Court enter an Order requiring the Defendants to alter their facilities and amenities to make them accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities to

the full extent required by Title III of the ADA and by NYCHRL, and the NYSHRL;

- c. The Court enter an order directing the Defendants to evaluate and neutralize their policies, practices and procedures toward persons with disabilities, for such reasonable time to as to allow the Defendants to undertake and complete corrective procedures to the Premises;
- d. The Court award compensatory damages, including all applicable statutory damages and fines, to Plaintiff;
- e. The Court award reasonable attorney fees, all costs (including but not limited to court costs, expert fees, etc.) and other expenses of suit to the Plaintiff; and
- f. The Court award such other and further relief as this Court deems necessary, just and proper.

Dated: New York, New York
December 2, 2022

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SUMMONS AND COMPLAINT

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